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Review

Dusty Books?: the liability of oldness

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Manuscripts

Dusty Books ?: the Liability of Oldness¹

Selznick, P. 1949. *TVA and the Grass Roots*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Burns, T. and Stalker, G.M. 1961. *The management of innovation*. London: Tavistock Publications. (1st edition, 1961; 2nd edition, 1966; 3rd edition, 1995).

Lawrence, P. and Lorsch, J. 1967. *Organization and environment: managing differentiation and integration*. Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University.

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1. We would like to thank Jean Bartunek for her support, guidance and probing comments in the process of producing this essay.

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3 Books are foundational to management scholarship. Indeed, Suddaby and Quinn Trank (2013) go
4
5 further and say that books are “arguably (the) *most* influential storehouse of academic knowledge in
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7 management”. We agree and hope to forward this line of reasoning with this essay. Our particular
8
9 aim is to pique the interest of PhD students and early career academics in some of the foundational
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11 studies of our discipline, by showing what they could contribute to current concerns and issues. In
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13 particular, we highlight the importance of research monographs – books that are research studies,
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15 not books that attempt to summarize existing research. We believe that several of these earlier
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17 research monographs should not be left to molder in the library stacks. Instead we argue that they
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19 have been subject to selective attention and that there is much more to draw from them than
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21 received wisdom acknowledges. In short: reappraisals are warranted.
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27 Having made the claim and hopefully shown that these studies retain relevance to day, three
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29 questions follow: First, why are they ignored? Second, is there anything about them that helps us
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31 learn about how to do similarly insightful research. Third, why is research of this form not the
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33 model for today’s efforts?
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37 Various research monographs that were major landmarks some 50 years ago in establishing the study
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39 of organizations as a discipline continue to be cited, but most of the citations are to generic
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41 contributions rather than dealing with the specific research as a whole. To single out just three: Alvin
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43 Gouldner’s *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy* (1955); Peter Blau’s *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy* (1953);
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45 Michel Crozier’s *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (1963) were foundational studies that have shaped our
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47 discipline. Other texts that, in their time, were also highly regarded now seem to have less influence
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49 and remain on the library shelves, possibly rightly so (e.g., Rice, 1958; Jacques, 1951). But given the
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51 importance of such works to the development of our discipline, and their comprehensive conceptual
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53 and empirical nature, our interest is in whether important insights and nuances are being missed in
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3 common reception. Can lessons that are relevant for today's concerns still be learned from them, or
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5 is honorific and limited citation their appropriate legacy? As Robert Merton said, we all stand on the
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7 shoulders of giants in order to take our ideas forward, but perhaps those shoulders are even broader
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9 than typically acknowledged. Our suspicion is that there are important insights to be learned from
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11 many early works and that better familiarity with them would obviate our tendency to 'reinvent'
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13 them anew.
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18 Some re-examination has already occurred. Spearheaded vigorously by Matt Kraatz (Kraatz and
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20 Block, 2008; Kraatz, 2009; Kraatz and Flores, 2015) there has been a particular rediscovery of the
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22 work of Philip Selznick. As institutional theory has moved from a concern with diffusion and
23
24 isomorphism to interest in the processual dynamics of institutional change, Selznick's *TVA and the*
25
26 *Grass Roots* (1949) and *Leadership in Administration* (1957) have been re-introduced. Selznick was
27
28 'rediscovered' mainly because of his presumed relevance to power and politics, the study of
29
30 organizations as institutions, and organizational leaders as institutional guardians. But, as we will
31
32 show in a moment, there is much more to be explored in his comprehensive oeuvre. More broadly
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34 we argue that what has been done with Selznick's work can and needs to be done with other
35
36 important figures and their foundational contributions.
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42 To make our point we focus upon three classic books of our discipline. We will begin by revisiting
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44 Selznick's *TVA and the Grass Roots: a study of politics and organization* (1949) which addresses issues of
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46 corporate cooptation, and the role of particular interests. Then we turn to Tom Burns and George
47
48 Stalker's *The Management of Innovation* (1961) not only because of its emphasis on innovation, but
49
50 especially because of its concern with organizational politics and dynamics. No doubt, this book is a
51
52 cornerstone of the 'contingency' approach, but could (and, as we argue, should) also be read from
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54 the power-process and micro-political perspective that Burns developed all his life (e.g. 1961; 1977;
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3 Burns and Flam, 1987). Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch's *Organization and Environment: Managing*
4 *differentiation and integration* (1967), another 'icon' of contingency theory is the final book, chosen for
5
6 what it has to say to the current interest in organizational responses to multiple logics. These texts
7
8 have received significant recognition – at the time of writing, according to Google Scholar, Burns
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10 and Stalker's work had gained 14,470 citations, Lawrence and Lorsch 14,019, and Selznick's *TVA*
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12 3,768.
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18 Each of these texts has a surface resonance with some of today's themes within organization theory,
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20 which makes them appropriate for our purpose of directing attention to them. A second reason for
21
22 revisiting these particular texts is that they are detailed case analyses that at the outset were not
23
24 theoretically but problem driven. Selznick was examining a New Deal organization that ran counter
25
26 to the political culture of the time, and that was therefore subject to tension and conflict. It was
27
28 essentially a politically charged organization. Burns and Stalker's study arose from an evaluation of a
29
30 Scottish regional economic policy that was attempting to deal with dying industries. Lawrence and
31
32 Lorsch saw themselves as dealing with fundamental issues of managing complex organizations.
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34 Given the scale of the issues they were addressing and their comprehensive empirical studies, the
35
36 format used by all of these researchers was the research monograph – a format that provides the
37
38 space to develop a wealth of ideas. This is refreshingly old-fashioned and sweepingly symphonic in a
39
40 time when 'soundbite' or 'salami slicing' (Greenwood, 2016) research strategies induce scholars to
41
42 split their work into the maximum number of possible individual publications – on which we say
43
44 more later.
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51 A third reason is prompted by Golden-Biddle, Lock and Reay's (2007) analysis of how citations are
52
53 too frequently used. Their analysis shows that the obsession with 'theoretical novelty' required by
54
55 today's journal review process results in citations that utilize only those parts of a publication that
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3 speak to the citing author's particular purpose. It is what they call 'typification' where citations refer
4
5 to a small part of the asserted knowledge claims in the original research. Such typified citations place
6
7 the focal work within a particular category of work – e.g., contingency theory, organization structure,
8
9 institutionalized organizations – and blind out the broader, more nuanced story.

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13 But then, these initially selective ways of citing, suggest Golden-Biddle, Lock and Reay, become
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15 institutionalized and, over time, honorific. Readership and numbers of citations start to fall apart –
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17 not, as could be imagined, in the sense of more readers than citations, but rather the reverse.
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19 Honorific, typified citations lead to isomorphic narrowing of knowledge accumulation as subsequent
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21 citations centre around the same limited idea of the research that is being handed down over
22
23 decades. The result is that the initially 'missed' material and ideas remain lost – especially when the
24
25 works cited are monographs that contain multiple and interwoven ideas (we return to this point
26
27 later). We argue that this is exactly what has happened with the books that we review.
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33 What follows is a discussion of how each of the three books still has considerable relevance for
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35 today's scholarship in ways that are off the beaten track of their 'standard' reception.
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41 **Philip Selznick**

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44 Philip Selznick was 30 when *TVA and the Grass Roots* was published in 1949; it was his PhD thesis
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46 from Columbia. How many of us have produced a seminal work from our PhD, especially as a
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48 research monograph, that continues to inform our discipline's thinking six years after his death at
49
50 the age of 91? Selznick spent his academic career at the University of California, Berkeley, as
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52 professor of sociology and law. His work was groundbreaking in its ideas of institutional leadership
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3 (*Leadership in Administration*) and in its understanding of moral aspects of managing and studying
4 organizations (e.g., *The Moral Commonwealth*).
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9 Of the three authors we are reviewing, Selznick is the one who has continued to have the strongest
10 substantial presence in ongoing organizational theories, especially in institutional theory even though
11 he is, overall, the least cited of the authors we are reviewing, according to Google Scholar. We
12 believe that this is linked to the ‘re-emergence’ of institutional theory as a dominant approach. Yet,
13 as Scott (2014) points out, while Selznick’s presence has been centered on two of his works, *TVA*
14 *and the Grass Roots* and *Leadership in Administration*, even those have been utilized in very limited ways.
15 Hence, while recent scholarship has included these two books as part of a revived neo-
16 institutionalism (e.g., Kraatz and Block, 2008; Kraatz, 2015; Kraatz and Flores, 2015; also,
17 Washington, Boal and Davis, 2008), there is more in these works that deserves attention.
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30 Selznick himself (2000: 277) commented on what he was trying to do in his study of the Tennessee
31 Value Authority (TVA), a government-owned agency in the electricity sector that had the explicit
32 aim of stimulating local participation in its policies and to promote a decentralized decision-making
33 style – hence ‘grass roots’. For Selznick, it was a story about the adaptation of an organization to the
34 threats and pressures that it faced. In particular, the story dealt with vested, organized interests and
35 the extent to which TVA surrendered to those interests. Selznick was particularly focused on the
36 ways in which the adaptations changed the character and purpose of the agency and, in his terms,
37 not for the better. Prima facie, this is much more than what we currently take out of *TVA and the*
38 *Grass Roots*. Selznick also saw *Leadership in Administration* as a chance to do some reanalysis of what
39 he had written in *TVA*.
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54 Fueled by the shift in neo-institutional theory to a concern with processes and dynamics, *TVA and*
55 *the Grass Roots* and *Leadership in Administration* have received increasing citations but, as Washington
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3 et al. (2008) point out, such citations are usually to support a notion of institutions as infused with
4 value – a clear example of Golden-Biddle et al.’s (2007) typified citation. But Selznick’s work is itself
5
6 infused with a central interest in power, politics, organizations as institutions, and leaders as
7
8 institutional guardians. As Scott (2014: 273) observed: “the early thrust of his efforts appeared to
9
10 focus on the “dark side” of organizations – the forces undermining their original mission [...]”.
11
12 Indeed, the subtitle of *TVA* is ‘a study of politics and organization’ and as such, it speaks to issues
13
14 of power, corporate cooptation, the role of vested interests, and corporate corruption.
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20 All of these issues have resurfaced in the last decade as important issues for organizational analysis –
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22 often with the lament (ironical in our view) that these darker facets of organizations have been
23
24 neglected. Fligstein and McAdam (2012), for example, reiterate a longstanding critique that the role
25
26 of power has been completely underestimated in institutional theory and that there is little emphasis
27
28 on actors with interests, resources and positions that help determine allocation. Lawrence (2008),
29
30 similarly, suggests that there has been too much emphasis on institutional control and not enough
31
32 on the ways by which actors avoid control and resist institutional pressures through the power that
33
34 they can activate. And more generally, the criticism has been made that power and politics are the
35
36 “ugly duckling” of organizational theorizing and too often missing (Czarniawska-Joerges &
37
38 Jacobsson, 1995: 375). We are told that “[p]ower is rarely, if ever, discussed in the management of
39
40 change literature” (Mills, Dye & Mills, 2009: 139; see also Hardy and Clegg, 2006).
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46 Our point is that much of this presumed neglect results from selective reading of foundational
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48 works. In *TVA* in particular, but also in *Leadership in Administration*, Selznick actually has much to say
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50 on issues of power and politics. *TVA* is about the ways in which external constituencies pressured
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52 the organization to recognize their interests, and how in responding to those powerful interests the
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54 *TVA*’s original goals were deflected. Cooptation of external interests into the leadership structure of
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3 the TVA undermined the organization's original goals. But the sharing of power with such interests
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5 had to be kept informal because there was a degree of illegitimacy in yielding to those pressures.
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7 Selznick offers the following insight: cooptation that "results in an actual sharing of power will
8
9 operate informally, and cooptation oriented toward legitimization or accessibility will be done
10
11 formally" (Selznick, 1949: 260). This insight – that formal cooptation is often "the sharing of public
12
13 symbols or administrative burdens of authority and public responsibility, but without an actual
14
15 transfer of power" (ibid.) – could painfully inform current studies on, for instance, diversity,
16
17 corporate responsibility, accountability, transparency, or participation. Moreover, as with so many
18
19 writers of the 1950s and 1960s Selznick emphasized how much organizations matter because they
20
21 are the primary tools of industrial society. But, they are imperfect tools especially because interest
22
23 groups can hijack them for their own goals.
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30 Selznick's concerns with organizational power and politics, the role of organizations in society, and
31
32 the consequences of their activity, especially when taken over by partisan interests and manipulated
33
34 by elites, fits with emerging interests in organizational misbehavior, corruption, organizational
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36 political activity, ideologically driven organizations, or the diversion of organizations from their
37
38 stated aims (e.g., Hillman & Hitt 1999; Hillman, Keim & Schuler, 2004; Palmer, 2012). The cases of
39
40 Enron, Worldcom, and Goldman Sachs, reaffirm the observation that organizations are tools that
41
42 can be hijacked by interest groups and that they can serve as weapons. Selznick is a warning voice
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44 that though organizations are actors, we should not divert our attention away from questions about
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46 whose purposes they serve in the end.
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54 **Tom Burns and George Stalker**
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3 Rather like Selznick, Burns and Stalker were concerned with a policy issue – the attempt after World
4
5 War II to develop an electronics industry in Scotland and northern England as part of the post-war
6
7 reconstruction. At that time, television, air travel, nuclear power and electronics were all new,
8
9 increasingly becoming mass products and services. As a result of such developments, organizations
10
11 faced the necessity of profound change – they had to learn how to do new things. In the context of
12
13 the electronics industry this involved, for example, attempts to turn organizations that had been
14
15 producing wooden railway ties into producers of components for newly developed computers. In
16
17 the language of Burns and Stalker, their study was about the experience of firms familiar with
18
19 ‘mechanistic’ organizational arrangements attempting to become more ‘organic’.
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25 *The Management of Innovation* (1961) captured those experiences. The book has been very widely cited
26
27 and largely interpreted as being about the differences between mechanistic and organic
28
29 organizational forms, and of their relationship to different environmental circumstances. We believe
30
31 that this is a misinterpretation as (in our view) the book is actually about organizational change and
32
33 the difficulties of accomplishing it. Of course, the distinction between mechanistic and organic
34
35 forms was a major breakthrough in understanding how innovations are possible and it rightly
36
37 became an important inspiration for thinking about that issue. It is a distinction that continues to
38
39 resonate with organizational scholars today (e.g., Sine, Mitsuhashi and Kirsch, 2006). But it is very
40
41 interesting to read Tom Burns’ own opening statement about the findings of the research:
42
43 “Technical progress and organizational development are aspects of one and the same trend in
44
45 human affairs; and the persons who work to make these processes actual are also their victims”
46
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48 (Burns and Stalker, 1961: 19). Does that sound anything like the Burns and Stalker we know in
49
50 organization theory?
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3 Tom Burns was 48 when *The Management of Innovation* was first published in 1961. He died in 2001.
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5 Between 1939 and 1945 he served in the Friends' Ambulance Unit and was a prisoner of war in
6
7 Germany between 1941 and 1943. Immediately after the Second World War, from 1945 to 1949, his
8
9 interests were in urban sociology and he worked with the West Midlands Group on Post-War
10
11 Reconstruction and Planning. He became a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh in 1949 where he
12
13 remained until his retirement. He was the founder and first chair of the sociology department. As
14
15 with Selznick, and as his career prior to *The Management of Innovation* shows, Burns had a constant
16
17 interest in the ways in which the study of organizations could inform policy. He expressed his
18
19 approach to research in the preface to the second edition of *The Management of Innovation*: "by
20
21 perceiving behaviour as a medium of constant interplay and mutual redefinition of individual
22
23 identities and social institutions [...] it is possible to begin to grasp the nature of changes,
24
25 developments and historical processes through which we move and which we help to create" (Burns
26
27 and Stalker, 2nd edition, 1966: xxx).
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34 We are not saying that Burns and Stalker didn't rightly become famous for their distinction between
35
36 mechanistic and organic systems, but there is so much more than that to *The Management of Innovation*.
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38 Even at the level at which it has become part of the lexicon of organization theory, many nuances of
39
40 their argument have been overlooked. For example, Burns and Stalker emphasize that "the two
41
42 forms of system (not structure, our insert) represent a polarity, not a dichotomy; there are, as we
43
44 have tried to show, intermediate stages between the extremities empirically known to us. Also, the
45
46 relation of one form to the other is elastic, so that a concern with oscillating between relative
47
48 stability and relative change may also oscillate between the two forms" (1961: 122). They continue
49
50 by emphasizing that an organization "may (and frequently does) operate with a management system
51
52 which includes both types" (ibid.). Where do we find systematic discussions of organizational
53
54 oscillation and the operation of dual or more management systems? Maybe with their analyses Burns
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3 and Stalker have preempted organizations now labeled as ‘hybrid’ and the impact of multiple logics
4
5 on them?
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9 Another important yet neglected concern within Burns and Stalker’s discussion of mechanistic and
10
11 organic systems is that of commitment. All organizations demand commitment from their members;
12
13 indeed they cannot operate without it. In organic organizations, however, the lesser emphasis upon
14
15 formal rules and demands is compensated for by an emphasis upon shared beliefs and values.
16
17 Organic organizations demand extensive commitment and the individual must be prepared to ‘yield
18
19 himself’ (stet) as a resource whereas mechanistic organizations can operate with relatively low levels
20
21 of member commitment. Not only does this idea provide quite a different take on the ‘iron cage’ of
22
23 bureaucracy (the visible bars of the bureaucratic cage versus the invisible workings of ideological
24
25 control), it is critical because of the way it links self-interest, organizational politics, innovation, and
26
27 organizational change – themes foundational for micro-political approaches that regard
28
29 organizations as multiple, interlocking power games (e.g. Crozier and Friedberg, 1979; Küpper and
30
31 Ortmann, 1988). Read from such a power-process perspective, *The Management of Innovation* seems to
32
33 be a completely different book from the one we find presented in standard organization theory
34
35 textbooks.
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42 Much of *The Management of Innovation* is dedicated to issues of power and status because of the way in
43
44 which they are related to organizational change. Those issues were a lifelong interest for Burns. As
45
46 he put it in his wide-ranging preface to the 3rd edition of the book: “People who work in firms are
47
48 at one and the same time co-operators in a common enterprise and rivals for the material and
49
50 intangible rewards of competition for advancement” (Burns, 1995: xvii). Indeed, Burns saw the
51
52 internal politics and power struggles involved in organizational change as sometimes enabling radical
53
54 change, and at other times as leading to defensive, resistant and obstructive strategy and tactics.
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3 These ideas of the intertwining of politics, status and careers were so important to him that in 1977
4 he published *The BBC: Public service and private world*, following and developing these ideas further.
5
6 Interestingly, this book, like Selznick's *The Organizational Weapon* (1951), made no impact on
7
8 organization theory, perhaps because by then the journal article was becoming the dominant form
9
10 for reporting research or perhaps because both books were too political to be picked up in Business
11
12 Schools.
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18 In examining issues connected with radical change, Burns and Stalker emphasized two aspects. First,
19
20 organizations are made up of intertwined systems that make change difficult, including technical,
21
22 political, status and career systems. Second, because of such systems (and their institutionalized
23
24 nature) mechanistic organizations find it particularly difficult to accomplish radical change; indeed,
25
26 these organizations unwittingly invoke 'bureaucratic pathologies' – i.e., they introduce additional
27
28 bureaucracy that, though intended to help them change to more flexible and innovative
29
30 organizations, actually makes them less able to do so. Crozier (1963) later included this paradox in
31
32 his 'circulus vitiosus' of bureaucracy. Indeed, it is clear that Burns and Stalker doubted whether
33
34 planned, conscious change could succeed when it was radical (echoes here of the ecology studies
35
36 that appeared a decade and a half later).
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42 Burns and Stalker argue that mechanistic organizations are made up of groups and departments with
43
44 relatively stable career structures and sectional interests that lead to power struggles in any change
45
46 process as groups struggle to gain control of new functions and new resources. These organizations
47
48 cope with the challenge of change by introducing more specialized positions to handle the change
49
50 and by giving them hierarchical authority. Such expansion of roles leads to more and more complex
51
52 and ambiguous authority relationships – a 'pathology' distinctive of mechanistic organizations. A
53
54 further pathology Burns and Stalker identify is the ready introduction of committees (definitely not
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3 teams). As Pugh, Hickson and Hinings later put it, these pathological systems “are attempts by
4
5 mechanistic organizations to cope with new problems of change, innovation and uncertainty while
6
7 sticking to the formal bureaucratic structure” (1985: 33).
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9

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11 To what extent, then, does the *Management of Innovation* inform contemporary organization theory?
12
13 Based on the way that it is usually cited, the answer is: only very modestly. Rarely do scholars consult
14
15 the book for its insights into change. Nonetheless, in the light of what they have to say about the
16
17 difficulties that organizations experience in becoming more innovative, the ideas of Burns and
18
19 Stalker are still highly relevant to today’s problems – perhaps especially for understanding the
20
21 challenges of moving from exploitation to exploration.
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26 The dynamic, processual nature of the Burns and Stalker study, the ideas of sectional interests,
27
28 organizational politicking, system interrelationships and the resulting pathologies provide a far
29
30 livelier and ‘inhabited’ view of organizations than today’s portrayal of contingency theory (with
31
32 which Burns and Stalker are typically associated) would have us believe. The idea of bureaucratic
33
34 pathologies highlights the difficulties organizations face in changing their ingrained practices.
35
36 ‘Normal’ procedures are followed as ways of dealing with new situations; old solutions are applied to
37
38 novel problems. In fact the extent to which many studies on institutional change echo such insights
39
40 without pointing to the similarities or using the language and examples of how to think about such
41
42 difficulties provided by Burns and Stalker is quite astounding. For us, their concept of ‘pathology’ is
43
44 especially worth exploring further as it offers a distinct way of theorizing possibilities and obstacles
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46 of change that avoids both overly agentic and deterministically structural accounts.
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55 **Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch**
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3 Paul Lawrence, who died in 2011, was Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Harvard Business
4 School. He started his lifelong academic career at Harvard University in 1947. Jay Lorsch is the
5
6 Louis Kirstein Professor of Human Relations at the Harvard Business School where he has spent his
7
8 academic career since receiving his DBA in 1964. Lawrence was 46 and Lorsch ten years younger
9
10 when *Organization and Environment* was published in 1967. The book received the Academy of
11
12 Management's "Best Management Book of the Year Award" in 1969. It was this book that added
13
14 the term contingency theory to organization theory's vocabulary.
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20 The starting question for Lawrence and Lorsch was 'What kind of organization does it take to deal
21
22 with various economic and market conditions?' The emphasis on the processes of 'differentiation'
23
24 and 'integration' that followed, and that has been handed down in a wide variety of texts (e.g.,
25
26 Donaldson, 2001; Scott and Davis (2011), is a way of describing the structures, systems and actor
27
28 characteristics that enable organizational effectiveness when *an* organization is facing a range of
29
30 different environmental conditions. The research that produced *Organization and Environment* was
31
32 carried out in ten firms in three different industries – plastics, food and containers. The firms in each
33
34 industry were chosen for the very different environments that they faced.
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39 *Organization and Environment* has a distinct managerial focus – much more so than the books of
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41 Selznick or Burns and Stalker. Starting from the observation that organizations internally need to
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43 mirror the degree of differentiation of their environments, the central theme of Lawrence and
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45 Lorsch's landmark study was the relationship between the two essential complementary
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47 organizational design processes – 'differentiation' (the allocation of tasks and responsibilities
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49 between organizational subunits/departments) and 'integration' (achievement of coordinated
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51 collective effort of the differentiated parts). For Lawrence and Lorsch, these processes are
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53 'essentially antagonistic' and successfully undertaking them constitutes a central challenge for
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3 managers. Following the (then) dominant line of theorizing, Lawrence and Lorsch observed that in
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5 successful firms the differences in environmental and task uncertainties faced by subunits could and
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7 should result in potentially very different ways by which those subunits are structured and managed.
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9 The ability to enable and respect differences between the working styles of departments is thus
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11 critical – it allows each unit to perform its responsibilities in distinct ways.
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15 This recognition of intra-organizational differences distinguishes the study from, for example, Burns
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17 and Stalker (1961). But how should the centrifugal implications of intra-organizational
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19 differentiation be overcome in order to achieve coordinated action? Lawrence and Lorsch observed
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21 various integrative arrangements being used in their sample of firms – from hierarchy, through use
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23 of project teams and/or integrators, to carefully designed incentive systems. The important finding
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25 was that in successful organizations the selection *and* the range of integrative devices varied
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27 according to the extent of differentiation. Put simply, Lawrence and Lorsch found that the higher
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29 the level of differentiation, the greater and more complex should be the range and forms of
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31 integration. Poorer performing organizations were those that either had too much or too little
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33 integrative effort, and the wrong forms of integration. Balance between differentiation and
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35 integration was essential.
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41 In many ways, the contingency approach to understanding organizational design has been criticized
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43 and discredited (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Whittington, 1988; although see Van de Ven, Ganco and
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45 Hinings (2013) for a reassessment). Nonetheless, the core theme of *Organization and Environment* –
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47 the challenge of resolving ‘essentially antagonistic’ relationships between core organizational
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49 elements – still resonates with central issues in organizational research such as, for example, the
50
51 current interest in ‘ambidexterity’ (e.g., Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2008) or
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53 in ‘hybrid organizations’ and especially with ‘structurally compartmentalized hybrids’ (Battilana &
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3 Lee, 2014; Battilana & Besharov, 2017). While the predominantly strategy oriented literature on
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5 ambidexterity mostly acknowledges, at least in passing, the legacy of Lawrence and Lorsch, neo-
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7 institutional scholars investigating hybrid organizations seem to be far more hesitant to embrace this
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9 heritage. Yet, the Lawrence and Lorsch study offers significant insights into the unfolding
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11 understanding of organizations that operate in institutionally pluralistic contexts.
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15 To start with, their study exemplifies that in studying how organizations respond to multiple logics
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17 we should seek a more ‘complete’ story, in two ways. First, we need to consider efforts at integration
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19 as involving multiple aspects of design and managerial actions, including the structural aspects of
20
21 organization design, styles and requirements of leadership, and incentive systems. For Lawrence and
22
23 Lorsch it is the overall pattern (rather than a single component) that may be critical for
24
25 understanding how organizations are managed. Looking at and analyzing the working of the
26
27 individual parts is important (and, perhaps unfortunately, is often driven by the length restrictions of
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29 the journal format), but we need to also embrace a more encompassing approach. It is the range of
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31 integrative structures and arrangements and their interrelationships that matter – not any one of
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33 them alone.
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40 The second aspect of the ‘complete’ story that Lawrence and Lorsch prompt us to pursue is the
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42 emphasis upon an appropriate *balance* between any given level of differentiation and the scope and
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44 combination of integrative devices. This idea of balance has been relatively ignored in the research
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46 on how organizations deal with multiple logics. The possibility that the degree of differentiation
47
48 between logics can range from low to high and that this would affect if, and how, they can be
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50 integrated, has received very little (if any at all) attention. Instead, in most studies on hybrid
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52 organizations, logics are defined and treated as though they are incompatible or at least at odds. Yet,
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54 the Lawrence and Lorsch study would prompt us to ask just *how* differentiated logics are, and
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3 whether certain pairings of logics are particularly incompatible, complementary, or neutral towards
4 each other. Lawrence and Lorsch's strong stance against the idea that one set of integrative
5 structures might fit all degrees of differentiation and their insight that too much integration is as
6 much a source of organizational failure (similar to Burns and Stalker's pathologies) as is too little
7 should encourage neo-institutional researchers to explore the varied repertoires of forms and
8 practices that emerge, stabilize and eventually become institutionalized.
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12 Another inspiration we draw from *Organizations and Environment* relates to the question of time and
13 temporality. Lawrence and Lorsch define differentiation in terms of four dimensions – the
14 'formality' of a subunit's structures (e.g., whether mechanistic or organic), the 'time orientation' of
15 the work involved (whether implicating long or short term performance feedback), management
16 style (which they label 'interpersonal orientation'), and 'goal orientation'. While these are not
17 necessarily the most critical dimensions today, one in particular prompts reflection – the notion of
18 time orientation. Maybe a useful but neglected way of reflecting upon institutional logics and hybrid
19 organizations would be to consider their different implications not only for what is done in order to
20 gain social endorsement (which is the emphasis of much work on hybrids) but to think about the
21 implications of different logics for *how* work is done and the extent to which particular pairings of
22 logics are especially problematical when they occur together. Further, the idea that institutional
23 logics might have distinctive temporal rhythms (an idea that has not been picked up) is intriguing.
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25 Much as we are beginning to recognize that logics have their own 'aesthetic' (Jones et al., 2017) and
26 'emotional registers' (Toubiana & Zietsma, 2016), it might be instructive to explore whether they
27 also have their own 'temporal registers'.
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54 Lawrence and Lorsch focused upon the use of integrative arrangements to countervail the
55 centrifugal impulse of differentiation. But they acknowledged that even where an appropriate
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3 balance between differentiation and integration is achieved, instances of conflict are still inevitable
4 and will characterize all organizations. Managing differentiation and integration, therefore, is more
5 than putting into place structural bits and pieces. It is also about handling the outbursts of conflict
6 and contestation that inevitably will occur where ‘tectonic plates’ meet. The lesson that we draw is
7 that in studying hybrids we should give more explicit attention to the management of conflict. By
8 emphasizing the structural arrangements that ‘satisfy’ external audiences we have learned much
9 about how hybrids gain legitimacy and might prosper. But we have done little to explore how
10 ‘outbursts’ and breakdowns within hybrid organizations are addressed and resolved. It’s one thing to
11 please external audiences, but another to satisfy the drives and motivations of committed actors
12 within the organization. This is a missing and important piece of the story.
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30 In some ways the works of Philip Selznick, Tom Burns and George Stalker, and Paul Lawrence and
31 Jay Lorsch are very different, but there are nonetheless some shared attributes. They all arise from
32 close and detailed examination of real-life organizations – there is a very distinct sense in reading
33 these works that the authors ‘know’ the objects of their examination. They all treat the organization
34 as a whole rather than focus upon selective parts of it. They all highlight the political dimension of
35 organizational life. And, they all have continuing relevance to several of the important issues being
36 addressed or raised today. These are not dusty books that should be relegated to the bookshelves for
37 access only by historians. On the contrary, they should be making an ongoing and active
38 contribution to our discussions. We have chosen three books examples, but, naturally, there are
39 many other classics that deserve revisiting. At the beginning we singled out Gouldner’s *Patterns of*
40 *Industrial Bureaucracy* (1955); Blau’s *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy* (1953); and Crozier’s *The Bureaucratic*
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3 *Phenomenon* (1963) as foundational research monographs. We suggest that these are worthy
4 candidates for renewed appraisal (see e.g., Hallett and Ventresca, 1996 on Gouldner).
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9 This takes us back to our opening questions: Why are these foundational texts ignored? Is there
10 anything about them that helps us learn about how to do similarly insightful research? And, why is
11 research of this form not the model for today's efforts?
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15 16 17 18 19 **Three questions**

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21 Let's take the second question first. As we noted a moment ago, there are two aspects of the above
22 texts and the research reported within them that are worth noting. First, they share a holistic
23 approach to understanding organizations; and second, they exhibit a deep understanding of the
24 organizations studied. The holistic approach is something that has been lost in many organizational
25 studies. Yet, these texts continue to offer insights because they are concerned with 'the organization'
26 as the unit of study, and deal with systems, structure, politics, power, change, status, and careers – as
27 a totality. For Burns and Stalker, for example, organizational change, organizational politics,
28 organizational commitment, etc., can only be understood and explained in relation to the particular
29 type of organization which, in turn, is embedded in a particular type of environment. The
30 penultimate sentence in *The Management of Innovation* says, "This book has, in fact, dealt with an array
31 of internal manifestations of the external tasks and problems, and of changes in their disposition,
32 which affect the existence of the concern (organization, our insert) as a whole" (Burns and Stalker,
33 1961: 262).
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52 There is, too, a deep understanding of the organizations studied. In all the texts the particular
53 analytical points and theoretical developments are amply illustrated through epic presentations of the
54 empirical basis for any assertions. What these various organizations do and how they do it is
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3 elaborated in depth because the authors spent considerable time in each organization interviewing as
4 many people as possible in managerial and supervisory positions – all told, for example, some 300
5 people were interviewed by Burns and Stalker. This, clearly, is what Barley (2008) calls ‘coalface’
6 work. It is this deep understanding of the organization that makes the theoretical statements robust
7 and it is a large part of the reason why these books have become classics of organization theory.
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16 So, now to the first question – Why are these texts largely ignored? By which we mean why is their
17 relevance to today’s issues rarely seen? One reason, mentioned above, is that journal articles typify
18 research to the point where the original content of the research becomes institutionalized in a
19 misleadingly narrow way (Golden-Biddle et al., 2006). Today, we work on the assumption that
20 recently published works (usually articles) appropriately signal what has gone before. But, as we have
21 sought to point out, that’s a mistaken assumption.
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There is another aspect of this liability of oldness. Today there is such an overwhelming volume of
research papers being produced that some filtering mechanism is necessary in order to avoid being
overwhelmed. We can’t read everything, so we need some guidance. One such mechanism is the
comforting myth that published research *is* cumulative and takes appropriate account of previous
work. But we are arguing that this is not the case. The consequence is that books inappropriately
become dustier and dustier and ignored.

Perhaps the journals (and reviewers) are also partly responsible because they/we allow the use of
citations that are primarily about displaying that the author rather broadly ‘knows’ the field. Yet, as
Golden- Biddle et al (2006) show, too often the reference is overly vague and (we think) perhaps the
author does not really know the scope and coverage of the cited work – especially if they are older
books and younger authors. Because of the emphasis on ‘novelty’ it is important to establish what is
‘new’ in an article, which encourages the selective citing of previous work. Dealing with the literature

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3 in the analytically summary fashion required for publishing in journals is quite different from the
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5 way in which it can be approached for a research monograph.
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9 It could be argued, of course, that we as academics should be reading these books during our
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11 doctoral training and that all of us in that blissful and overly brief moment should be socialized to
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13 appreciate the value of research of that nature. But are we? Do we demand that our students
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15 properly dig into these foundational works? Or do we engage too much with more recent papers
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17 that give often vague, sometimes even misleading clues on what has gone before? Do we suffer
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19 from an unhealthy ‘obsession’ with the recent and the novel? Do we on the one hand, profess that
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21 the apprentices to our profession should know the history of their subject, and yet on the other
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23 hand give opposite signals by encouraging theses comprised of ‘three papers’?
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28 Our third question asks why research of this form is not the model for today’s efforts instead of the
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30 emphasis on articles and getting out as many papers as possible from a particular piece of research.
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32 As we have already said, it is a hallmark of our dusty books that the timescale for the research was
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34 long and the researchers took time and effort to understand the organizations that they were
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36 studying; they created their own databases. The researchers were working at the ‘coalface’ of the
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38 organizations. Churning out papers doesn’t always fit easily with this style of research. Moreover, the
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40 rise of ranking systems (by, for example, *The Financial Times*) and of national assessment exercises (as
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42 in the UK) that use journal publications as metrics of individual scholar’s and institutional
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44 performance, further encourages this world of salami slicing of research. Isomorphism is strong!
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49 It is not the case, of course, that books are not written any more, but that research monographs are
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51 no longer salient in our field. Books that win awards are often not research monographs. Moreover,
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53 they tend to be written later in scholars’ careers when, having established a journal track record,
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55 synthesis and broader statements can be produced without incurring adverse career consequences.
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3 We believe that research monographs can be important initiators of subsequent journal articles that
4 develop the theoretical ideas contained in such monographs. An example from our own work is the
5 way in which Hinings et al. (1988 inspired much of our subsequent thinking on radical change that
6 was later published in journals (e.g. 1993 and 1996). Our point is that there can and should be a
7 dynamic relationship between research monographs and journal articles. Today, journal articles have
8 replaced monographs so it become much more difficult to bring the 'slices' together.
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18 In conclusion, we lament that some of the great works of our discipline still have insights of
19 relevance and yet are largely ignored. Our starting point, as we said, has been to pique the interest of
20 doctoral students and junior faculty and to nudge them to revisit these (and other classic) texts. We
21 have also pointed our fingers at some of today's practices that contribute to the liability of oldness
22 that seems to permeate our world. Food for thought?
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